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Palestine

181

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UNDER SECRETARY'S MEETING

Palestine Conciliation Commission

Attached for the information of the Under Secretary's Meeting are two papers:

(a) Mr. McGhee's statement for the September 2nd Under Secretary's Meeting.

(b) A statement by the President dated August 26, 1949.

Carlisle H. Humelsine

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
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PALESTINE CONCILIATION COMMISSION

BACKGROUND STATEMENT

1. Events Prior to Present Session.

By a resolution of December 11, 1948, the General Assembly established a Conciliation Commission for Palestine consisting of three States, members of the UN, and requested that a committee of the Assembly consisting of China, France, the USSR, the UK, and the US, should propose the names of the three states which would constitute the Commission. The latter committee decided that France, Turkey, and the US should form the Commission and appoint representatives.

The GA resolution instructed the PCC to "take steps to assist the governments and authorities concerned to achieve a final settlement of all questions outstanding between them." The resolution also gave the PCC specific instructions with respect to Jerusalem which "should be accorded special and separate treatment from the rest of Palestine and should be placed under effective UN control", and with respect to the "repatriation, resettlement and economic and social rehabilitation of the refugees and the payment of compensation." The PCC was instructed to present to the fourth regular session of the GA its detailed proposal for a permanent international regime for Jerusalem.

The PCC, on which the US was represented by the Honorable Mark Ethridge, Turkey by Hussein Yalcin, and France by Claude Boisanger, set up its official headquarters in Jerusalem on January 24, 1949. It proceeded to establish a special committee on Jerusalem and its Holy Places, in order to undertake preparatory work in connection with the proposals to be submitted to the GA. The Commission then made a series of official visits between February 12 and 25 to the Arab states and Israel in order to establish contacts with the governments concerned and to canvass them on their views as to how negotiations might be commenced in connection with a final settlement of all outstanding questions.

Owing to the practical impossibility of continuing negotiations by repeated visits to the various capitals, the Commission decided to invite first the Arab states to hold meetings with it at Beirut on March 21, 1949, for the purpose of exchanging views on the refugee problem and on the general question of Jerusalem. Following the exchanges of views of the Arab states, from March 21 to April 6, 1949, the Commission proceeded on April 7 to Tel Aviv where it had a long interview with the Prime Minister of Israel.

Following

Following its return to Jerusalem, the PCC proposed to the governments of the Arab states and Israel that they send delegations to Lausanne with which the PCC could continue its work of conciliation. Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Israel accepted this proposal and appointed delegations headed by persons exercising considerable authority in foreign affairs in their respective countries. Iraq and Saudi Arabia did not accept the proposal but generally indicated that they would be willing to give favorable consideration to such a settlement as might be agreed upon at Lausanne.

The Commission held its first meeting in Lausanne on April 27, and then held official meetings with each of the delegations. There was no formal direct contact between the Arab and Israeli delegations. These first contacts, both official and personal, led the Commission to believe that a "sincere desire existed on both sides to achieve positive progress toward the reestablishment of peace in Palestine."

The Commission urged the Arab and Israeli delegations to extend their exchange of views to all problems covered by the GA resolution. To this end the parties concerned separately signed a protocol on May 12, 1949, annexed to which was a map indicating the boundaries defined in the GA resolution of November 29, 1947, which was thus taken as the basis of discussion with the Commission.

The Commission also decided to establish a sub-committee for general matters including particularly territorial questions. At the same time the Commission created a Technical Committee on refugees which was instructed to proceed to Palestine to inaugurate, with the assistance of the governments of the Arab states and Israel, preliminary studies concerning the refugees. During the course of discussions it soon developed that the Arab delegations were exerting considerable pressure in favor of negotiations on the refugee question, while the Israeli delegation was pressing in favor of territorial negotiations. This situation was recognized by the Commission as making it difficult to arrive at any agreement on the solution of these fundamental principles. Although the PCC made efforts to narrow the differences between the two parties, it soon became evident that a stalemate had been reached. Consequently, on June 25, 1949, the PCC decided, after consultation with the Arab and Israeli delegations, to recess the Commission until July 18. It was believed that during this recess the delegations would have a fresh opportunity to consult with their governments with a view to advancing constructive proposals upon reconvening in Lausanne. It was also decided that the three committees created by the Commission would continue to function on the basis of projects which had been submitted for consideration.

During the recess period the US Government made approaches to the Arab states represented at Lausanne and to Israel in an effort to persuade them to enter into the second period of discussions at Lausanne

with

with a new and constructive approach towards all issues outstanding. The US was joined by the Turkish and French Governments in making such approach.

2. Present Session.

On July 16 Mr. Paul Porter was appointed as US representative on the Palestine Conciliation Commission and departed from the US on July 21 for Lausanne. Shortly after his arrival Mr. Porter reported that preliminary impressions left him doubtful as to the prospect of important changes of attitude as the result of the recess.

The Israeli delegation submitted a proposal regarding the willingness of the Israeli Government to repatriate a number of Arab refugees. A figure of 100,000 was mentioned which the Israeli delegation said would bring the total number of Arabs in Israel to 250,000. The PCC decided not to transmit formally this proposal to the Arab delegations as it believed instant rejection would result and an impasse created.

On August 11 Mr. Porter left Lausanne and returned to the US for consultation. As a result of conversations with Mr. Porter in Washington it was determined that there was little hope for real progress by the conciliation process. It was consequently decided that the most effective approach to a Palestine settlement at the present time would be on the basis of an economic report to be submitted by an economic survey mission, rather than on a political agreement at Lausanne. The possibility of further concessions by the Arabs and Israelis and some measure of agreement between them under the auspices of the PCC were not ruled out, but it was considered that the major emphasis should be shifted to the Economic Survey Mission.

It was also tentatively decided with Mr. Porter that after the PCC submitted a progress report to the UN stating its efforts at Lausanne during the past seven months and its establishment of the Economic Survey Mission, it would recess until the Economic Survey Mission had completed its report. It was further agreed that when it reconvened the PCC should submit a further progress report to the UN incorporating the findings and recommendations of the Economic Survey Mission. It was suggested that this report should also include the Commission's recommendations as to whether it should continue its activities or whether it should be replaced by some new agency.

Mr. Porter returned to Lausanne on August 18, in order to confer with the other members of the PCC, and to arrange for the establishment of the Economic Survey Mission. Mr. Porter is now on his way back to the US. It is anticipated that the Economic Survey Mission, under the chairmanship of Mr. Gordon Clapp, Chairman of the Board of the Tennessee Valley Authority, will proceed to the Middle East in the near future. Mr. Clapp will be accompanied by British, French, and Turkish deputies and by a multinational technical staff. It is expected that the survey will take about 10 weeks.

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